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CSOs as Accountability Agents in Natural Resource Management and Energy Governance in West Africa

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About WACSI

The West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) was created by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) to reinforce the institutional and operational capacities of civil society in the region. WACSI also serves as a resource centre for training, research and documentation, experience sharing and political dialogue for CSOs in West Africa.

About WACSERIES

WACSeries are analytical periodic write-ups on topical themes and issues relevant to West Africa. These write-ups provide experts, researchers and practitioners a space to reflect, analyse and posit views and recommendations on emerging issues and debates.

The WACSeries Op-Eds are thought provoking and intellectually engaging write-ups that provide critical reflections and analysis of issues relevant to civil society and development in West Africa.

Objectives of WACSERIES

- To raise awareness on key issues in West Africa;
- To generate debates and discussions on these issues;
- To proffer recommendations on civil society involvement in advocacy;
- To provide recommendations to policy makers.



Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as Accountability Agents in Natural Resource Management and Energy Governance in West Africa

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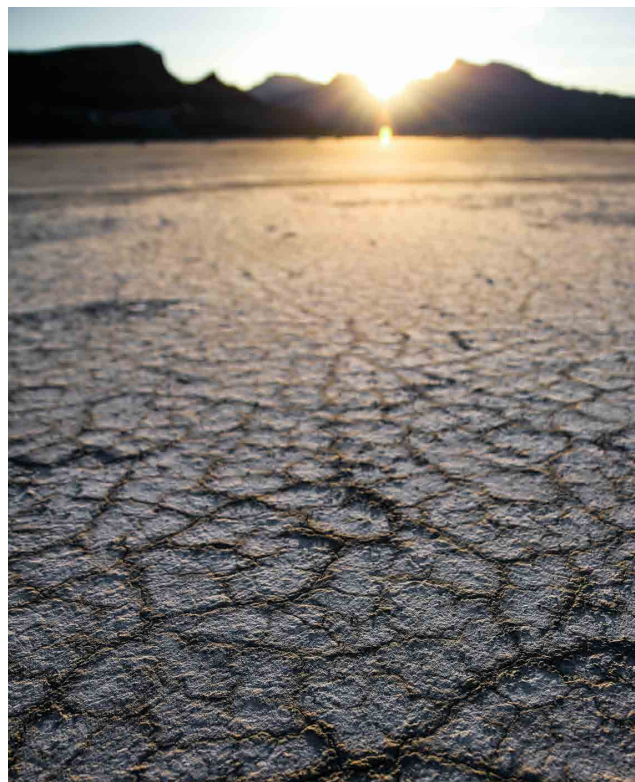
Introduction

From the Niger Delta in Nigeria to the southern part of Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa is blessed with a vast array of natural resources. To paint a more vivid picture, Ghana is endowed with a vast deposit of gold, manganese, bauxite and diamond. Similarly, vast deposits of manganese, gold, copper, uranium, bauxite and limestone can be found in Burkina Faso. Furthermore, Niger is the [fourth-largest](#) producer of uranium globally; while Mali is the third-largest producer of gold, and [Guinea](#) is home to 50% of the global bauxite reserve.

Despite these enormous mineral deposits in West African countries, West Africans are among the poorest in the world. The exploitation of these minerals demonstrates little or no positive improvements in the lives of West Africans. Extractive industries exploit these minerals for their profits. They do so, largely, to the detriment of the immediate communities in which they mine. This, coupled with weak legislation, or rhetorically robust legislation that is not implemented to the latter, leaves West Africans in abject poverty.

Some civil society organisations (CSOs) recognise these actions that scale up poverty in West Africa. Some CSOs have engaged in a variety of actions to hold governments and mining companies to put the

interest of citizens at the heart of mining deals. This paper highlights the challenges in the mining industry vis-à-vis West African citizens. It zooms in on the role played by some CSOs in different countries that are championing advocacy efforts to ensure that West African citizens derive more benefits from the extractive processes in their communities.



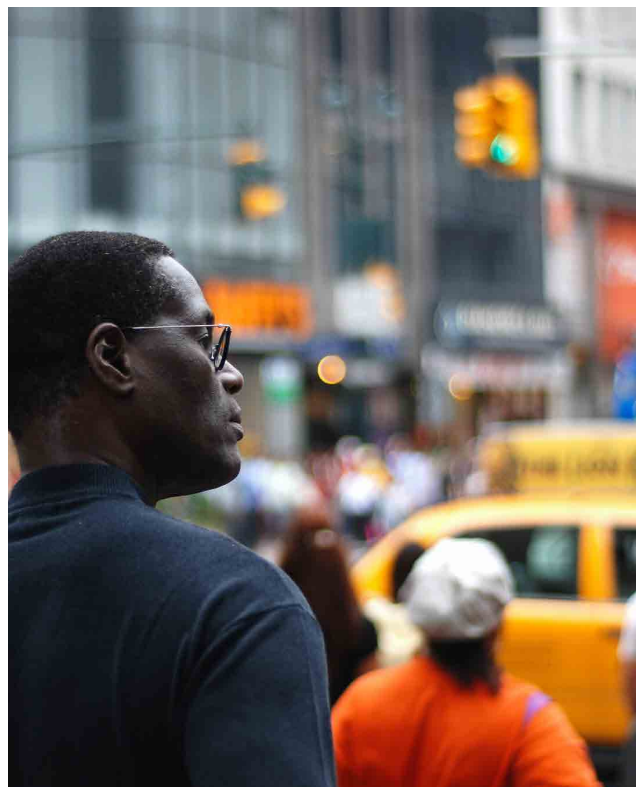
1- Resource Curse in Africa – More Reality than Myth

Africa is rich in mineral resources, but remains paradoxically home to more than 70% of the [world's poorest people](#), with over 400 million people on the continent living below the global poverty line. In Guinea, over [50%](#) of the population live below the poverty line [awith less than \\$2 a day](#). Similarly the [Borgen Project](#) further states that over 15 % of the population is lacking access to food, whilst over 25% suffer from chronic malnutrition. Nigeria is recognised as the largest producer of crude oil on the African continent, but still, has over [85 millions](#) people living in extreme poverty. This story is not unique to Nigeria. It is a similar narrative many countries in the West African sub-region.

Even more alarming is the fact that citizens living in communities where these natural resources are being mined and extracted continue to live in [abject poverty](#). In most cases, these communities are negatively impacted by extractive activities, resulting in environmental degradation, [increased land conflict](#), air and water pollution, diseases and loss of means of livelihood

For instance, the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, once known to contain the [highest concentrations of biodiversity](#) in the world, including an abundance of flora and fauna, arable terrain and the most diverse species of freshwater fish than any other ecosystem in West Africa, has had its ecology destroyed by [oil exploration and extraction](#). The corresponding adverse effect of oil exploration in the Niger-Delta has crippled the economy and the livelihood of the local people who take pride in fishing and [depend](#) on the land for survival.

Similarly, the land-locked country of Niger Republic constitute [7% of the global](#) uranium deposit making her the fourth-largest uranium reserves in the world. However, these mineral deposits have caused more anguish for Nigeriens with her people living in the dark; and battling chronic hunger and malnutrition for many years. As much research has shown, the mining of uranium deposits has benefitted several [corporate interesets as well as others nations](#), to the detriment of the Nigerien people. The story remains the same in the Boke region of Northwestern Guinea, where years of bauxite mining [has damaged](#) water sources in the communities resulting in reduced access to water for drinking, washing, and cooking. This forces women and children to walk long distances or to wait for long periods to obtain water from alternative sources.



2- Ineffective Governance: The Bane of Resource Curse?

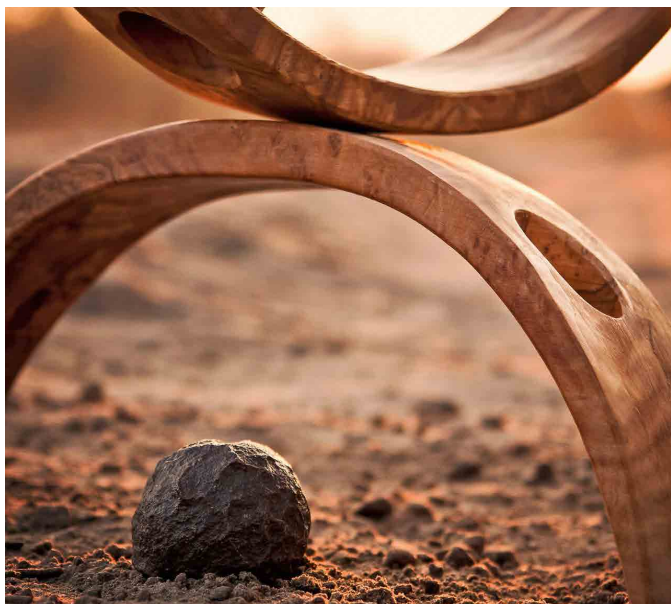
The capacity and resources of the government agencies that oversee the extractive sector across the West Africa region, despite noticeable attempts by different national governments, remains largely insufficient and in-effective in safeguarding the rights of host communities' dwellers. This can be attributed to [weak fiscal regimes](#) that lead to considerable leakages in the profit-sharing mechanisms between extractive companies and governments. There is also the failure of regulatory organs of government in [exercice their powers](#) over the issue of protection and compensation of the state and communities for depleted resources as well as related environmental damage or loss of livelihood.

In Guinea, the national assembly has a commission on mining and on natural resources, which should, in theory, provide oversight on the government's regulation of the mining sector. However, for political reasons, this commission remains severely handicapped.

In 2007, the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative ([NEITI](#)) was established to develop a framework for transparency and accountability in the reporting and disclosure by extractive industry com-

panies for revenue due to or paid to the Nigerian Government. Since its establishment, NEITI has conducted multiple audits and the data provided by the initiative are now major tools used by civil society organisations (CSOs) and other stakeholders in making inputs to government's planning and in the budgetary process. However, the delays in the release of the audit reports makes the information quite outdated for advocacy. For example, the [2017 NEITI Oil and Gas Audit Report](#) was just recently released.

In 2017, the Nigerian government approved the [clean-up of Ogoniland](#): the 1600-square kilometre area made famous by the environmental activism of Ken Saro-Wiwa, who, [was executed](#) by the military administration of late dictator General Sani Abacha in 1995. However, almost three years later, there have been [no cleanup efforts so far](#).



3- Response of CSOs to Environmental Injustices

In a bid to address this injustice, CSOs across the West African region have served as the voice of these host communities, empowering them and putting pressure on the government to adopt mining policies and programmes to promote transparency and accountability in the extractive sector.

The Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) has since 2014 supported CSOs such as the National Advocacy Coalition on Extractives (NACE), the Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining (WACAM), the African Centre for Energy Policy (ACEP), the African Centre for Leadership, Strategy and Development (Centre LSD) to mention a few that work to ensure

good governance in the extractive/natural resource sector in different West African countries.

In Sierra Leone, [the National Advocacy Coalition Extractives \(NACE\)](#) – a network of CSOs, was created in 2000 to influence government policies, empower communities and strengthen engagement and research with the support OSIWA. NACE has gotten the government to review [the Mines and Mineral Act 2009](#), to implement the Community Development Agreement (CDA) in all mining communities in the country and [revoke](#) of the license of two mining companies (Shandong Steel and SL Mining) due to failure to make royalty payments to the government.

[The Wassa Association of Communities affected by Mining \(WACAM\)](#) in Ghana has over the last two decades worked hard to sensitise communities, media, faith-based institutions, students, tertiary institutions and parliamentarians on mining issues. WACAM has been at the forefront of ensuring that mining companies in the country adhere to the principles of responsible mining practices and have promoted the [Free Prior and Informed Consent \(PFIC\)](#) practice as an acceptable decision-making tool to help communities have a say in deciding if they want extractive and mining activities to be carried out in their communities or not.

In Nigeria, the [Africa Centre for Leadership, Strategy and Development \(Centre LSD\)](#) works to strengthen civic engagement and advocacy for effective natural resource governance. It has contributed to the creation of a Ministry for Solid Minerals in Taraba, a state located in the northeastern part of the country, to fully harness the solid mineral potentials of the state. The Centre is leading in the development, publication and popularisation of the [20 principles of #DoMiningRight](#) which has contributed to the promotion of the diversification of the economy, improvement in the welfare of host communities, the protection of the environment, and ensuring sustainable development. It has also facilitated the planned creation of a database for small scale and artisanal of miners in the country to address security challenges in the sector.

Additionally, [Fondation de la santé de la Terre Mère \(HOMEF\)](#), a Nigerian ecological think tank created a platform for host communities to identify, discuss the problems they face and make resolutions that inform their media and policy advocacy campaigns. This approach ensures that leaders of host communities are carried along and well informed of the core issues and

are aware of their environmental and human rights and has made them more accountable to the think tank and their community.

As a result of the activities of the above mentioned organisations, governments of these countries are now more receptive to addressing the plight of host mining communities. In Sierra Leone, the government has been extremely proactive and recognises NACE as a strategic partner and includes them in their decision-making process. In Nigeria, engagements facilitated by the Centre LSD has contributed to the roll-out of the roadmap for the growth of the mining industry by the Federal Ministry of Mines and Steel Development (MMSD). In Ghana, WACAM has been instrumental in the passage of several legislations such as the Petroleum Revenue Management Act (2011), the Artisanal and Small Scale Mining (ASM) Framework and the introduction of the Multi-Sectoral Mining Integrated project to help curb illegal mining in the country.



4- Challenges Faced by CSOs

Despite all these great strides, CSOs in West African countries still [face a host of challenges](#) including but not limited to the following:

- Limited funding compared to the deep pockets of the extractive industries and companies.
- Intimidation from unethical government officials who abdicate their responsibilities to citizens where these minerals are extracted from.

- Lack of cohesive government policies or implementation of already existing policies and regulations as well as deliberate exclusion from policy formulation has also led to distrust from host communities.
- Limited involvement of women in advocacy campaigns and negotiations between host communities, government and mining companies.
- The ineffective use of technology to report the abuses and violations of extractive companies.

There is, therefore, lots of work to do and CSOs, host mining communities and mining companies have pivotal roles to play in making sure that actual change happens. The following recommendations if adhered to, could contribute to bring about the desired change.

5- Recommendations to Key Actors

a. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

CSOs should carry out the following activities in addressing the issue of natural resource management:

- **Collaboration:** There is a need for CSOs in the region to adopt more cross-border collaborations, including exchange of information, data and intelligence that can provide the fulcrum for better monitoring and regulation.
- **Capacity building:** There is also the need for CSOs working on extractive governance to empower host communities even more towards demanding for the adoption and implementation of citizen-friendly policy reforms in the extractive and mining sector.
- **Partnership:** Furthermore, CSOs can strengthen strategic partnerships with key stakeholders such as the local governments who have ties to the communities. They can also build partnerships with faith-based institutions, universities within these localities, and even the private sector to put an end to the natural resource curse in West Africa.

b. Host Mining Communities

In addition, to this host mining companies also have an integral role to play in ensuring that their rights are safeguarded by:



- **Participation in the decision-making process:** Host mining communities should organise themselves and ensure that their interests are well represented in the formulation of policies, contracts, and laws concerning the mining sector including participation in ownership of assets.
- **Capacity building:** There is a need for host communities to build their capacity to engage government and mining companies and advocate and campaign for decent mining practices.
- **c. Mining Companies**

Mining companies also have an important role to play by adopting best mining practices and ensure that they respect the rights and environment of host mining communities. For example [Glencore](#), a Swiss-based mining company adopts sustainable mining by employing Chem Sulphide technology to treat mine drainage at its Raglan nickel mine in Canada. Such exemplary actions should be replicated by mining companies operating in West African countries.

Conclusion

Africa is rich in mineral reserves. West Africa is blessed with several extractive resources that can benefit its citizens. There is little reason for these countries to be in perpetual poverty. There is a need for civil society to continually stand in the gap as the accountability partner to hold both the government, the private extractive companies and the leadership of these communities to protect the rights and interests of the citizens. CSOs should also ensure that extractive corporations act responsibly and within the ambit of the laws of the countries they operate in as well as in line with global standards in the extractive industry.

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